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A SKETCH

OF

GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM

BY

ALFRED P. PUTNAM, D.D.

SALEM, MASS. :
EBEN PUTNAM.
1893.



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A SKETCH
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GEN. ISRAEL PUTNAM.

BY

ALFRED P. PUTNAM, D.D.

MAJOR GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM¹ was born, January 7, 1718, in a house which is still standing on its original site, near the eastern base of Hathorne or Asylum hill, in Danvers. It has several times been enlarged and is still in an excellent state of preservation. Its first proprietor was his grandfather Thomas, whose second wife was Mary Veren, widow of Nathaniel Veren, a wealthy merchant of Salem. Their only child was Joseph, who inherited the homestead. Joseph wedded Elizabeth Porter, daughter of Israel and Elizabeth (Hathorne) Porter, and granddaughter of John and Mary Porter, the emigrant progenitors of the Porters of Essex county. From this marriage sprang the soldier whose history we are to trace. Elizabeth Hathorne was a daughter of Major William and Ann Hathorne, whose country seat was where the Danvers Asylum now stands, on the hill above mentioned. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the celebrated novelist, was also a lineal descendant. John Porter, likewise, was of "Salem Village," now Danvers. For many

¹MAJOR-GENERAL ISRAEL (*Joseph, Thomas, John*), born in Salem Village, now Danvers, 7 Jan., 1717-18; baptized 2 Feb., 1718; died Brooklyn, Conn., after an illness of two days, 29 May, 1790; married, first, at Danvers, 19 July, 1739, Hannah, daughter of Joseph and Mehitable (Putnam) Pope of Danvers, born there; baptized 3 Sept., 1721; died Brooklyn, Conn., 6 Sept., 1765, in the 44th year of her age; married, second, 3 June, 1767, the widow Deborah (Lothrop) Gardiner. Madame Gardiner was daughter of Samuel and Deborah (Crow) Lothrop of Norwich, Conn., and widow of John Gardiner, fifth proprietor of Gardiner's Island, who died 19 May, 1764. She died at Putnam's Headquarters at Fishkill on the Hudson, 14 Oct., 1777, and was interred in Beverly Robinson's family vault. Mr. Gardiner she had married as his

years he was deputy in the General Court, first from Hingham and then from Salem; and, as the Colonial Records testify, he was a man "of good repute for piety, integrity and estate."

The ancestry of the future soldier-patriot, in various lines, is thus seen to have been of Essex County stock. His later boyhood was probably spent in Boxford at the home of his step-father, Capt. Thomas Perley, while yet he would be a frequent visitor at the Putnam homes in Danvers. His early education was defective, partly because school advantages were then very meagre in the rural district in which he passed his youth, and partly, no doubt, because his strong natural inclinations were for farming and active out-of-door life, rather than for books and sedentary occupations. Robust and full of energy, he was as a boy given to sports, and to feats of strength and daring; and numerous trustworthy traditions of his courageous exploits in those days have been handed down in the old home from then until now, somewhat prophetic of his more extraordinary prowess and achievements in maturer years. Having attained an age when he would care for a share of his father's farm, he returned to Danvers and settled upon the portion set off to him, and here built a small house, the cellar of which yet remains. On the 19th of July, 1739, he married Hannah, daughter of Joseph and Mehitable (Putnam) Pope. The spot is still pointed out, not far from that of his nativity, where stood the humble habitation in which for a brief period the young couple dwelt, and in which their first child, Israel, was born. Shortly afterward, they removed to Pomfret, Conn., borne on by the continued tide of emigration that had already carried a large number of settlers into the eastern part of that state from towns about Massachusetts bay. There at length he was the head of a numerous family of children, some of whom removed to other parts of New England or to the west, their descendants being now widely scattered abroad through the

second wife, 21 Nov., 1755, being then the widow of Rev. Ephraim Avery of Pomfret. The children of Mr. Gardiner by Deborah (Lothrop) Avery were *Hannah*, born 31 Dec., 1757; married Samuel Williams of Brooklyn; died *s. p.* *Septimus*, b. 28 Dec., 1759; died unmarried 1 June, 1777. He was with General Putnam during many of his campaigns.

Children, all by his first wife:

ISRAEL, b. Danvers, 23 Jan. ; bapt. there 8 June, 1740.
DAVID, b. Pomfret, Conn., 10 Mar., 1742; d. y.
HANNAH, b. " " 25 Aug., 1744.
ELIZABETH, b. " " 20 Mar., 1747; d. y.
MEHITABLE, b. " " 21 Oct., 1749.
MARY, b. " " 10 May, 1753.
EUNICE, b. " " 10 Jan., 1756.
DANIEL, b. " " 18 Nov., 1759.
DAVID, b. " " 14 Oct., 1761.
PETER SCHUYLER, b. Pomfret, Conn., 31 Dec., 1764.

country. The ancient homestead in Danvers has been occupied by successive generations of his brother David, "the lion-hearted Lieutenant of the King's troops," as he has well been called.

In 1739, Israel, and his brother-in-law, John Pope, bought of Gov. Jonathan Belcher, a tract of land of about five hundred acres, of which he became sole owner in 1741. It was part of a large district known as the "Mortlake Manor," which, while it had special privileges of its own, was included in the territory that in 1786 was detached from Pomfret and erected into a separate and distinct township under the name of Brooklyn. Certain foundation stones, and a well and pear tree, have long marked the place where our brave pioneer built for himself his first house in Connecticut. Here was the family home, until larger accommodations were required, when he built the plain, but more commodious and comfortable house to which the domestic scene was transferred and in which many years afterward the old hero died. This, with its narrow chamber in which he breathed his last, is still standing and is an object of great interest with patriot-pilgrims who year after year visit it from afar. From the outset, his fondness for agriculture and horticultural pursuits was conspicuously shown in the vigorous way in which he subdued and cultivated his land, and introduced into Pomfret and its neighborhood all its best varieties of fruit trees, while it is chiefly due to his taste, sagacity, and enterprising spirit that were planted the long lines of ornamental trees which have graced the streets and added so much to the beauty of Brooklyn. Although at first the exemptions which the owner of Mortlake Manor enjoyed created a jealousy among the inhabitants of Pomfret and rather estranged him from participation in their affairs, yet his sterling worth was early recognized and his public spirit became more and more manifest. He was among the foremost in establishing good schools in the town and did not fail to ensure to his sons and daughters a higher education than he had received himself. Before he entered upon his military career, he joined other leading settlers in a library association which had a marked effect in developing a love of reading among the people and in elevating their general character. He was not only a thrifty and highly prosperous farmer, but, from first to last, he was also an earnest and helpful friend of all the best interests of the little, but growing colony.

The familiar story of his entering the wolf-den, together with the accounts of his many other bold adventures in his earlier manhood, needs not to be repeated in this brief sketch of his life. The late Hon. Samuel Putnam, a native of Danvers and judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, wrote, in a letter to Col. Perley Putnam of Salem, July 16, 1834:—"I was once in his house in Brooklyn where he treated me

with great hospitality. He showed me the place where he followed a wolf into a cave and shot it, and he gave me a great many anecdotes of the war in which he had been engaged before the Revolution, tracing the remarkable events upon a map."

In 1755, there was a call upon the New England colonies and New York for a large military force for the relief of Crown Point and the regions about Lake George, where the French had gained a strong foothold. The quota from Connecticut was to consist of a thousand soldiers. Though it would require him to leave behind a large property and a numerous family, Putnam was prompt and quick to respond to the summons. Brave, energetic and popular, he was at once appointed to the command of a company, which he soon succeeded in recruiting for Lyman's regiment, under the supreme command of Gen. William Johnson of New York. He received his "first baptism of fire and blood" in the unsuccessful encounter of Col. Ephraim Williams and his twelve hundred men with the enemy under Baron Dieskau, in the forests between Fort Edward and Lake George. This defeat of the provincials was soon followed by a brilliant victory, in honor of which Johnson built a fort, named Fort William Henry, on the spot where it was won. The autumn of 1755 was spent in constructing defences and in opening means of communication between different parts of the immediate country. As winter approached, most of the men returned to their homes, but enough remained to garrison the fortresses. Putnam's regiment was disbanded with the rest, and he himself returned to Pomfret to spend the season with his family. The next year witnessed a renewal of the campaign, the entire forces being under the command of General Abercrombie. Putnam was reappointed as captain, to serve as before in Lyman's regiment. During the service which he rendered in all this war against the French and their Canadian and Indian allies, he acquired a great reputation as a soldier and hero, by his dauntless spirit and marvellous deeds. These, taken in connection with his many perilous exposures, severe hardships, and hairbreadth escapes, gained for him swift and repeated honors from the Legislature of his adopted state, and made him immensely popular with all classes of his countrymen. The accounts of them, as given more or less fully by his biographers, Humphreys, Peabody, Cutter, Hill and various others, are no doubt exaggerated in some particulars.¹ But enough is true to warrant the fame and distinction that were then and subsequently accorded to him in abundant measure. In 1757, he was promoted to be major. He had previously connected himself with the famous band of rangers, whose chief was the notorious

¹Gen. Rufus Putnam, who was a soldier in the Massachusetts contingent, kept a diary which has been printed and which corroborates Humphreys' narrative.

Major Robert Rogers. Near the time of the outbreak of the revolution, this remarkable hunter, scouter and roving adventurer, notwithstanding all his ardent promises and professions of loyalty and devotion to the cause of the colonies, went over to the British and received from them an appointment as colonel. His volume of "Journals" makes but very few and slight allusions to Putnam, who on one occasion had saved his life and who had borne so conspicuous a part with him in their hard and hazardous campaigning; and this circumstance, together with the fact that some of his friends and apologists grew to be virulent defamers of his gallant comrade, makes it quite evident that no very strong tie of trust or affection united the two. Putnam could hardly have had much confidence in such a strange and lawless man as Rogers, and Rogers must have found little that was congenial to him in such a true-hearted and straightforward man as Putnam, whatever they may have had in common as free and fearless rangers. Here, in this capacity, they were still, as Colonel Humphreys says, "associated in traversing the wilderness, reconnoitering the enemy's lines, gaining intelligence and taking straggling prisoners, as well as in beating up the quarters and surprising the advanced pickets of their army."

On the 3d of August, 1757, Montcalm, the French commander, arriving with a large force from Ticonderoga, laid siege to Fort William Henry, whose surrender after six days was followed by a dreadful massacre of the garrison. Putnam had vainly endeavored to procure reinforcements from Fort Edward. His saving the powder magazine of Fort Edward, amidst the terrible conflagration that visited it, was one of the numerous daring deeds which he accomplished. His descent of the falls of the Hudson, at Fort Miller, and his happy escape from a strong party of Indians who fired at him incessantly as he skilfully steered his bateau down the dangerous rapids, was another of his characteristic achievements, which made his savage foes think that he was under the special protection and smile of the Great Spirit. Yet he was not so successful in escaping their barbarities, when once he was in their power. For it was about the same time, in 1758, that, in one of the forest expeditions in which he and Rogers and five hundred men were engaged, they took him prisoner and subjected him to the most brutal treatment. Judge Putnam's letter, which we have already quoted, states that they tied him to a tree to be put to death according to their custom under such circumstances, and then goes on to say: "They threw their tomahawks into the tree by the side of his head, and after amusing themselves in this way for some time, they lighted up the fire, and danced and yelled around him. When they were thus engaged, one of the tribe, a chief, who had been once a prisoner of Putnam and treated kindly by him, ar-

rived on the spot, and, recognizing his friend in their intended victim, immediately released him from impending slaughter. Gen. Putnam said that their gestures in the dance were so inexpressibly ridiculous that he could not forbear laughing. I expressed some surprise that he could laugh under such circumstances, at which he mildly replied that his composure had no merit, that it was constitutional; and said that he had never felt bodily fear. I can as easily credit that assertion as the one Gouverneur Morris made of himself, viz. : that *he never felt embarrassed by the presence of any one whomsoever, in his life*; and I am inclined to think that both of them spoke the truth concerning their own sensations." The wounds which these cowardly savages inflicted upon the fearless but helpless sufferer left scars which he long afterward carried with him to the grave. The almost incredible outrages and tortures which they perpetrated upon him were not brought to an end by the cutting of the cord that bound him to the tree, but were still continued, in other forms, all the while they marched him through a rugged country to Ticonderoga and thence to Montreal. There Col. Peter Schuyler, who had been held a prisoner in that city, hearing of his miserable condition, hastened to his rescue, supplied him with clothing and other necessities, and managed to procure his release. Putnam's tenth and last child was born afterward and he named it in grateful honor of this noble friend and benefactor. Nor was this the only kindness which the generous man rendered at this juncture. Among those whom the Indians had made captives was a Mrs. Howe, whose first and second husbands the redmen had murdered and the story of whose wretched lot under her inhuman masters is familiar to American readers. Schuyler paid the price of her ransom and entrusted her to the care of Putnam, who, on his return, safely conducted her beyond the reach of her persecutors.

In pursuance of a plan of 1759, to expel the French from their American possessions, General Wolfe was to lead an expedition against Quebec, General Prideaux one against Fort Niagara, and General Amherst another against Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Putnam, who had now been raised to the rank of lieutenant colonel, was with Amherst and assisted him in the reduction of both the objects or places of his meditated attack, being subsequently employed at Crown Point in strengthening its defences. In 1760, the British having captured Quebec, Amherst projected another expedition against Montreal, in which Putnam again accompanied him and rendered important service. The city, without resistance, capitulated at the formidable approach, and Canada was soon lost forever to the French. In 1762, the conquerors turned their attention to the French and Spanish possessions in the West Indies, France and Spain having entered into a coalition with each other. Mar-

tinique and the Caribbees were taken, and a naval force of ten thousand men landed on the island of Cuba. Presently a reinforcement of two thousand men arrived, half of the number being a regiment from Connecticut under the command of General Lyman. Putnam was with him as on previous occasions, and was ere long placed at the head of the regiment from his own state, Lyman being appointed to take charge of the whole body of these provincial troops. The former had been cool and courageous during a fearful gale which had been encountered at sea, and on reaching shore he was busy and efficient in constructing accommodations for the soldiers. In due time the British Commander, Albemarle, besieged one of the strong fortresses of Havana and stormed the city, which finally surrendered, and with it a large part of Cuba temporarily became a possession of the power that had now well-nigh gained the mastery of the continent. In 1763 a Treaty of Peace was concluded between France and England. On the northern frontier there was still some trouble from the Indians under Pontiac, the great chief of the Ottawas. The next year, Amherst sent forces to occupy several of the more important posts and avert the threatened danger. Under Colonel Bradstreet, Putnam, who had himself now been promoted to the rank of colonel, marched to Detroit with a Connecticut regiment of four hundred men. The savages soon dispersed, and all sounds or signs of war were finally at an end.

The year 1764 found the veteran again at home. Nearly a whole decade he had spent in fighting the enemies of his country. Forest, mountain, valley, river, lake and sea had witnessed his arduous service. It had given him a very wide, varied and valuable experience. It had been full of heroic deeds and romantic adventures and incidents; full of duties and responsibilities faithfully discharged, and of dangers and trials nobly met and overcome. After his original appointment as captain, he had been three times promoted. He had been under the command of some of the ablest and most celebrated generals of his time, and had been intimately associated with officers and patriots of high distinction. He had seen many parts of the land, and much of Indian as well as colonial life, and his activities had extended from Montreal to Havana. At every stage of his service, from first to last, he enjoyed the absolute confidence of his superiors and of his state, and was always in demand. How, under all these circumstances, his quick eye, his sagacious mind, his superabundant energies and his natural soldierly qualities and aptitudes, were trained for other and greater military trusts and performances, coming events were destined to show. What has thus far been written of him may well be remembered, as he appears before us in more momentous scenes.

More than another decade was to follow, however, before his advent there. Shortly after he exchanged the sword for the ploughshare and once more began to engage in his peaceful agricultural pursuits, the beloved wife of his youth and the devoted mother of his large family of children, died; and it was in the same year, 1765, that the husband and father, who had always, like his ancestors, been a sincere and faithful attendant upon public worship, united with the church at Brooklyn which was then under the pastoral care of Rev. Josiah Whitney, and made a formal profession of his Christian faith. It was during this year, also, that the news of the passage of the infamous *Stamp Act* reached the colonies and aroused them to stern protest and resistance. Putnam was foremost in making its execution impossible in Connecticut, and from that hour he stood forth as a ready and resolute defender of the imperilled liberties of the people. In 1767, two years after the death of his first wife, he married Mrs. Deborah Gardiner, who was the widow of John Gardiner, Esq., the fifth proprietor of Gardiner's Island, and who accompanied him in most of his campaigns of the Revolution, until her death in 1777 at his head-quarters in the Highlands. For a time he threw open his house for the accommodation of the public, and one of his biographers says; "The old sign, which swung before his door, as a token of good cheer for the weary traveller, is now to be seen in the Museum of the Historical Society of Connecticut, at Hartford." During the interval of time from the close of the French and Indian war to the outbreak of hostilities between England and her American colonies, he received many marks of confidence from his fellow citizens, attesting what they thought of his capacity, judgment and good sense, for municipal or civil functions also. He was placed on important committees; was elected moderator of the town meeting; was thrice chosen a member of the board of selectmen, the last time in 1771; and was deputy to the General Assembly. In the winter of 1772-73, he went with General Lyman and others to examine a tract of land on the Mississippi, near Natchez, which the British government had given to the men of Connecticut who had suffered greatly from exposures and hardships during the West India campaign, of which a brief account appears above. They also visited the Island of Jamaica and the harbor of Pensacola. There is still extant, in the possession of one of his descendants, a curious diary, "probably the longest piece of writing that he ever executed," which Putnam kept in his absence, and in which he jotted down, hastily and imperfectly, many of his own and the party's experiences by the way.

Immediately prior to the Revolution, Putnam held various conversations in Boston with General Gage, the British commander-in-chief, Lord

Percy and other officers of the royal troops, quartered in that city, and told them plainly his opinion, that, in the event of war between England and her American colonies, the former could not subjugate the latter, while he gave them to understand, clearly, that he himself should side with the cause of the patriots. In 1774, the enemy were strengthening their forces there and were thus subjecting the inhabitants to manifold privations and embarrassments. Bancroft relates how Putnam rode to Boston with one hundred and thirty sheep as a gift from the Parish of Brooklyn, and "became Warren's guest and every one's favorite." Soon after his return to Connecticut, an exaggerated rumor reached him of depredations of the British in the neighborhood he had just quitted, whereupon he aroused the citizens of his state to a fiery determination to avenge the attack. Thousands were quickly on their way to Massachusetts for this purpose, but the extraordinary excitement subsided when it was ascertained that only a powder magazine between Cambridge and Medford had been captured.

The news of the battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775, arrived at Pomfret by express on the morning of the twentieth. The intelligence reached Putnam as he was ploughing in the field, with his son Daniel, who was then but sixteen years of age, and who afterward wrote; "He loitered not, but left me, the driver of his team, to unyoke it in the furrow, and not many days after to follow him to camp." Having doubtless made haste to consult with the authorities, the old soldier received in the afternoon the tidings of the fight at Concord and at once set out on horseback for the scene of hostilities, riding a distance of well nigh a hundred miles. He was in Cambridge on the following morning, and also in Concord, writing from the last-named place under date of April 21, the second day after the battle, to Col. Ebenezer Williams of Pomfret:—

"Sir, I have waited on the Committee of the Provincial Congress, and it is their determination to have a standing army of 22,000 men from the New England Colonies, of which, it is supposed, the Colony of Connecticut must raise 6000." And he urges that these troops shall be "at Cambridge as speedily as possible, with Conveniences; together with Provisions, and a Sufficiency of Ammunition for their own use." From Cambridge he wrote again, on the 22nd, for troops and supplies to be forwarded without delay. On the next day the Provincial Congress took definite action for raising a New England army, having already sent delegates to Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Connecticut to request their coöperation, and having now already established a Camp at Cambridge, with Gen. Artemas Ward as commander-in-chief. On the 26th, the Committee of Safety issued a circular letter appealing to the

colonies to aid in the common defence; and on the third of May, the immortal Warren, as President of the Provincial Congress, wrote to the Continental Congress, earnestly pleading the great peril and need of Massachusetts, saying that she had resolved to raise a force of her own of 13,600 men and was now to propose corresponding action by the other New England colonies, and suggesting an *American Army* "for supporting the common cause of the American colonies." No effort was wanting to give to what some writers have called an "army of allies," a truly patriotic spirit and a most effective and consolidated union. Any suggestion or indication, that, under such circumstances, Massachusetts, who appealed so piteously for help, was to arrogate to herself privileges and honors that might not be shared as well by the colonies which she called to her assistance, would have made the mustering army but "a rope of sand."

The appeal was of a nobler character and it was not in vain. New England responded to it with alacrity. Stark and Reed came with their New Hampshire regiments and fixed their head-quarters at Medford, the whole forming substantially the left wing. Troops arrived from Rhode Island under the command of General Greene and were stationed at Jamaica Plain, while General Spencer with his First Connecticut regiment and with two thousand Massachusetts men was posted at Roxbury and Dorchester, the whole constituting the right wing, under Gen. John Thomas. Putnam, with his Second Regiment from Connecticut and with Sargeant's Regiment from New Hampshire and Patterson's from Massachusetts, was assigned to Cambridgeport, where he and his men formed a part of the centre, whose main body, composed of numerous Massachusetts regiments, was under the immediate command of General Ward at old Cambridge. Our Pomfret hero, soon after his prompt arrival on the 21st of April, had been called back to Connecticut to assist in raising and organizing the quota from that state, whose legislature now appointed him to be Brigadier General. He was absent only one week, and, as he set forth again to join the new army, he gave instructions that the troops should follow him as quickly as possible. His post at the centre, where he occupied the Inman House as his head-quarters, was an exposed one, and was deemed to be of special importance from the apprehension that the British might there make their first or chief attack. While he was here, he served at one time as commander-in-chief, during a temporary absence of General Ward in Roxbury. On another occasion he led a large body of the troops which had then gathered in Cambridge, numbering about 2,200 men from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, to Charlestown, marching them over Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill, and into the main street of the town, and then back

again to the encampment, so as to inspire them with more confidence and courage. He himself thus came to know still better the ground where he was soon to be a conspicuous actor.

On the 27th of May, he commanded a party of Provincials sent to Chelsea to drive off the live stock on Hog Island and Noddle's Island in the harbor, so as to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. They were attacked by a force of the British marine appearing with a schooner and sloop, but were completely successful in the hot engagement that ensued, only one of the Americans being killed and four wounded, while the loss on the other side, it is said, was twenty killed and fifty wounded. The victors seized the abandoned schooner, and, having taken possession of her guns, rigging and other valuables, set her on fire. In this expedition, General Putnam was accompanied by Dr. Warren, who went as a volunteer. On the sixth of June, these two patriot friends, under the escort of Captain Chester's Connecticut company, proceeded to Charlestown to effect an exchange of prisoners taken in one or more encounters. Having accomplished their object in a manner highly creditable to all concerned, they returned to Cambridge. Putnam was now more popular than ever. The Continental Congress caught the enthusiasm of the people and soon raised him to the rank of Major General. It conferred the honor upon Artemas Ward and Charles Lee on the 17th of June, the day of the battle of Bunker Hill, and upon Israel Putnam and Philip Schuyler, on the 19th, two days after it, not knowing at the time about the great conflict at Charlestown, even as such of these officers as were engaged in the strife were not aware of their promotion until the eventful day was quite of the past.

On the 15th of June, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety recommended to the Council of War, that "Bunker Hill be maintained by sufficient force being posted there," as it was supposed that the enemy were about to make a movement in that direction. The Council of War met on the following day and approved the plan, though Ward and Warren opposed it as a rash and perilous measure. Among those of the council who strongly favored it, Putnam was foremost and Gen. Seth Pomeroy was also prominent, the former believing it to be necessary as a means of drawing the enemy out from Boston and bringing on an engagement, the people being impatient for action. On the evening of that day, the 16th, a detachment of about 1000 men, comprising three regiments under Colonels Prescott, Frye and Bridge respectively, and nearly 200 Connecticut troops taken principally from General Putnam's regiment at Cambridgeport, together with Capt. Samuel Gridley's artillery company of forty-nine men and two field-pieces, was sent forth to occupy Bunker Hill and there intrench. Col. Samuel Swett's History of the Battle,

which was first published in 1818, and which, as the fullest and best of all the earlier accounts of it, came to be regarded as of "classical authority" and to serve as the "basis" of all reputable subsequent sketches, says: "General Putnam, having the general superintendence of the expedition, and the chief engineer, Colonel Gridley,¹ accompanied the detachment." After they had passed the Neck and reached the peninsula, a halt was made at Bunker Hill, when a consultation of the officers was held, and it was decided to push on to Breed's Hill and intrench there instead. Arriving at the summit of that eminence, the ground having been laid out by Putnam, Gridley and Prescott, the men began at midnight to throw up a redoubt, eight rods square and six feet high, with a breastwork extending from its northeast angle a hundred yards or more over the brow and down to a point near the base of the hill, in the direction towards the Mystic river. As soon as the British discovered at sunrise what the Provincials had done during the night, they at once opened fire on the small fort from their ships in the harbor and from Copp's Hill in Boston. Putnam, who had readily divined the need, had proceeded at earliest dawn to Cambridge for reinforcements and provisions, but, hearing the first firing of the guns, he immediately started back for Charlestown. Perhaps it was about this time during the day, that he wrote to the Committee of Safety the following message, of which the original copy is in the possession of Hon. Mellen Chamberlain: "By the bearer I send you eighteen barrells of powder which I have received from the Gov. and Council of Connecticut for the use of the army;"—a much needed and most timely gift which his energy had procured for the emergency. The men at the redoubt had toiled long and hard, and wanted rest as well as refreshments, while yet the breastwork was not completed. The authorities at headquarters had promised, on the previous evening, that the detachment should be *relieved* in the morning, and, in fact, early on that next morning General Ward had accordingly ordered another detachment of regiments to take its place, with three new colonels, Nixon, Little and Mansfield, to command them, instead of Prescott, Frye and Bridge; but, what with the well-known dilatoriness that then marked the conduct of affairs at Cambridge, these fresh troops were not required to parade and march until late in the afternoon. Meantime there was growing discontent at Breed's Hill. The soldiers applied to some of their officers, who in turn appealed to Prescott. The Colonel refused to send for the promised *relief*, but on a second appeal he consented to send for *reinforcements*, and dispatched

¹ Colonel Richard Gridley, who was a veteran of the French wars, was Chief Engineer of the army and planned the works on Breed's Hill. He afterward rendered distinguished service and received the rank of Major-General from the Continental Congress.

Major, afterward Governor, John Brooks, to Cambridge to procure them, Putnam himself hastening thither again about the same time, or earlier, to effect the result. Ward hesitated, from fear that the principal attack would yet be made nearer at hand, in which case all available forces would be needed there. Finally, though reluctantly, he ordered a third part of Stark's regiment, or about 200 men under Colonel Lyman, to march to Charlestown. Afterward, through the strong influence of Richard Devens, in the Committee of Safety which was then in session, he was prevailed upon to order the remainder of the New Hampshire troops to the scene of action. Putnam's post was at Bunker Hill. He had seen from the start, as others did not then, but as all see now, how imperatively necessary it was to fortify that eminence as well as Breed's Hill, as the former was situated nearer the Mystic and the Neck than the latter, and so might be made instrumental in preventing the enemy from flanking the redoubt, or might serve as a safe retreat in case the fort itself should have to be abandoned. He saw the chief point of danger and the one key of the situation. There he could best survey the whole scene and superintend its general operations. Under his command, various parties which he took from Prescott's detachment, and from the New Hampshire forces as they arrived, were soon employed in throwing up on Bunker Hill the intrenchments he was so anxious to construct. In anticipation of an aggressive movement on the part of the enemy, whose barges had landed several thousand troops at Moulton's Point, at the eastern end of the peninsula, the Americans were set to work in constructing the famous rail-fence which forms so important a feature in any satisfactory account of the battle. It extended about 600 feet, in a northwesterly direction, from near the northern end of the breastwork, at the base of Breed's Hill, towards the eastern slopes of Bunker Hill, and thence for about 900 feet northward to the Mystic river. It was especially the latter section of it that was now sought to be made a barricade against the foe, as it came to be evident to Putnam that there was not time to complete his intrenchments on the hill in the rear. It was formed by placing portions of fence-work near each other in parallel lines and by stuffing between them and capping them with new-mown hay from the immediate vicinity, the work being chiefly wrought by the men from New Hampshire and Connecticut, who with others were to line it in the hour of action. Stark and his men were at the extreme left of the lines, by the Mystic; Reed was at his right; and next to him, at the right again, were Captain Knowlton and his Connecticut braves, while still further towards Breed's Hill were parts of Massachusetts regiments and companies, Prescott being in immediate command of the redoubt, at the extreme right. With the more extended field as

just indicated, he had nothing to do. As Mr. Richard Frothingham, the historian, candidly admits: "Colonel Prescott was left in uncontrolled possession of his post. Nor is there any proof that he gave an order at the rail fence or on Bunker Hill." Of the *supreme* command, the late Mr. W. W. Wheildon, who was exceptionally familiar with all these local history matters, writes: "Of course, this could only be assumed by a superior officer, and this officer, beyond all question, would be General Putnam," who "necessarily became commander of the Battle and very sensibly and satisfactorily left Colonel Prescott in full command of the redoubt."

Soon after three o'clock, General Howe, the British commander, led on his formidable double column of grenadiers and light infantry solidly against the rail-fence and the yeomanry who were there, while the fire of his left wing under Pigot was kept up on the fort as a feint to divert the attention of the Provincials from the more serious point of attack. Putnam, who had charged his men "not to fire until they saw the white of the enemy's eyes," and to take good care to pick off the officers by aiming at their waistbands, was now, as in all the action, at the front, assigning fresh troops their places as they arrived, riding back and forth along the lines, encouraging his soldiers to be valiant and faithful, and exposing himself to the greatest peril. Tremendous as was the onset, it was in vain. The proud foe was hurled back with fearful confusion and destruction. Again the British General rallied his forces and made another and most vigorous and determined assault. Putnam, during the lull, had ridden over Bunker Hill to urge on the expected, but tardy re-inforcements, yet with little effect. He returned to be once more conspicuous in the fight, and again there was a gallant and effective repulse, "as murderous as the first." Here, along these more exposed, unsheltered lines, was the most protracted and terrible fighting of the day. Said Stark, "The dead lay as thick as sheep in a fold." Then it was that the enraged enemy, who had thus twice been foiled in their efforts to flank the redoubt, directed their main force against the redoubt itself, enfilading the breastwork, storming the height, rushing into the little enclosure and furiously assailing the greatly reduced garrison. It became a hand-to-hand and bloody, but unequal contest. Prescott soon ordered a retreat, and the escape of his surviving heroes was followed by the flight of the cowardly "reinforcements" who had kept aloof from the strife and had rendered no service during the day. The colonel pursued his sad way to Cambridge to report to Ward that the battle was lost. Seeing that the redoubt had been taken, Putnam and what was left of the main body of the army, who had been so brave and stubborn, were also obliged to retreat from the rail-fence. In vain he passionately besought

and sternly commanded his men to make one stand more on Bunker Hill. Finding this impossible, he led them forth to Prospect Hill, where he intrenched that same day in full sight of the enemy. There he was still recognized by the central authority as the leader of the host. Immediately and repeatedly, General Ward sent him reinforcements from Massachusetts regiments, until he had in a short time not less than four or five thousand men under him, at that important point.¹

Though compelled to surrender his post, Prescott was an admirable soldier. His only military distinction, previous to the Revolution, had been that he had served as lieutenant under General Winslow in the conquest of Nova Scotia and had been urged by British officers to accept a commission in the royal army. But this latter he had declined to do. His experience in war had been quite limited. As General Heath, who praised him highly, said, he was "unknown to fame." However meritorious his conduct as the immediate local commander at the *redoubt*, comparatively little contemporaneous or subsequent mention was made of him in connection with the battle of Bunker Hill. He was never promoted, but continued for two years to serve in the army, for a part of the time at least under Putnam himself. He then retired to his home in Pepperell, where among old friends and neighbors he was still honored and useful to the end of his days. That such an unknown and inexperienced man should have been singled out for the supreme command of so hazardous an enterprise, when there were on the ground a half dozen or more generals who ranked him, and who were quite as brave and competent and far more trained and distinguished, and that he should have been charged with the responsible trust instead of Putnam, who was not only his superior in office and service both, but who was first to suggest and the most strenuous to urge the movement, is to the last degree improbable.²

Owing to the secrecy with which the original detachment and expedition were partially veiled, and to the fact that Warren had been recently appointed Major General and was actually in the battle, it was for some

¹ Stark and his brave New Hampshire men had withdrawn to Winter Hill.

²Col. Samuel Adams Drake, the eminent historian, in his admirable pamphlet, entitled, *General Israel Putnam, the Commander at Bunker Hill*, says: "He (Putnam) was a veteran of the army campaigns. Beyond question he was the foremost man of that army in embryo which assembled at Cambridge after the Battle of Lexington. Not Ward, or Thomas, or Pomeroy, or even the lamented Warren, possessed its confidence to the degree that Putnam did. Mr. Frothingham truly says he 'had the confidence of the whole army.' Nature formed him for a leader; and men instinctively felt it." And with reference to the Battle of Charlestown Heights, he adds: "He alone, showed the genius and grasp of a commander there, in posting his troops, in his orders during the action, and in his fruitless endeavor to create a new position on Bunker Hill;" and "in estimating the services of General Putnam and Colonel Prescott, from a military view, the former must receive the award as the commanding officer of the field." In connection with this matter of the Bunker Hill controversy, the very able and keen discussion of the subject by Rev. Increase N. Tarbox, D.D., embraced in his *Life of General Putnam*, also deserves special mention. His argument, like Drake's, seems to us unanswerable.

time supposed by many that he, the illustrious patriot-martyr, must have led the American forces. As he came on the ground, Putnam offered him the command, which he refused, not having yet received his commission and having come only as a volunteer. He repaired to the redoubt where Prescott tendered him his own command, but this also he declined. The erroneous impression, as to his supremacy, gradually wore away as the facts became more and more known. Not Prescott, but Putnam, was hailed far and near as the hero of the hour. At home and abroad, toasts were drunk to his honor, and engravings and other pictures of him appeared in American and European cities, representing him as chief; and as such he passed into history, as numberless newspapers, poems, orations, school-books and chronicles have borne witness. As never before, he was now the idol of the people. Yet it was this "unbounded popularity" and the high promotion that accompanied it, which he never meanly sought for himself or begrudged to others, that inspired with a feeling of envy and jealousy certain military officers whose unfriendly spirit was never wholly repressed or concealed while yet he lived, but broke forth with peculiar violence long after his death and when most of those who knew him best and loved him most were in their graves. We shall have occasion to refer to this matter again, at the conclusion of our story.

What Washington thought of General Putnam and what he probably thought of his action and preëminence in the battle of Bunker Hill, he that runs may read, in the events which it remains to outline. On the 2d of July, the "Father of his Country" arrived at Cambridge, as the commander-in-chief of the American Army. He brought with him the commissions for the four distinguished officers who have been mentioned as having been promoted by the Continental Congress to be Major Generals. They occasioned much "dissatisfaction" and "disgust" among those who thought that their own claims to honor had been overlooked. The commissions of Ward, Lee and Schuyler were withheld for a time in consequence. But Putnam's, which alone had received the unanimous vote of Congress, was presented at once by Washington's own hand. Some of the offended officers threw up their commissions in the army by reason of the fancied slight, but were ere long persuaded to return to the service.

In the reorganization of the army, which was to carry on the siege of Boston, Washington gave to Putnam the command of the centre, near himself at Cambridge; to General Ward the command of the right wing at Roxbury and Dorchester; and to General Lee that of the left wing, toward the Mystic river. In the autumn Putnam fortified Cobble Hill and Lechmere's Point. In March, 1776, Washington appointed

him to head a formidable force of 4,000 men in an attack on the British lines, but the plan was frustrated by a most violent storm, which prevented the boats from landing the troops. During the night of the 16th of the same month, Nook's Hill, a Dorchester height nearest Boston and commanding it, was fortified, and such was the advantage which was thus gained by the beleaguering host, that the next morning the enemy evacuated the city, and, boarding their vessels, put to sea. Putnam, with a strong force, immediately entered the town and took possession of all its important posts amidst the exultant shouts and cheers of its long-suffering people.

Washington, having previously learned that the British meditated an attack on New York, had already sent General Lee thither to construct a system of defences for the protection of that city. These works, after the departure of General Lee for the south, were pushed forward by Lord Stirling, a brigadier in the American army. Under the apprehension that the British fleet, which had sailed from Boston, would soon appear in New York harbor, Washington forwarded his troops with all possible despatch to that point, ordering Putnam to go on and temporarily take the command while he himself was to follow shortly after. Putnam, on the 7th of April, sent Colonel Prescott's Bunker Hill regiment and other parties to take possession of Governor's Island and erect on it a breastwork, and also a regiment to fortify Red Hook on the Long Island shore, directly across the narrow channel, so as to hinder more effectually any operations of the enemy's ships in that quarter. The battle of Long Island took place a few months later. In the latter part of June, the British landed in great numbers on Staten Island, and in August crossed over to Long Island and advanced towards the American lines that extended across the Brooklyn peninsula from Wallabout Bay to Gowanus Creek. General Sullivan had been in command on that side of the East river, but was now superseded by Putnam, to whom Washington thus again gave proof of his trust and confidence. Putnam retained Sullivan at the centre to guard the passes and fight the Hessians. Both of them accompanied Washington as, having come over from New York for a brief visit, he rode towards evening on the 26th of August down to the outposts and examined the situation of affairs. The fierce engagement came on during the next morning, and it was while the two armies were in deadly conflict, that General Clinton, who during the night had led a column of 10,000 British soldiers by a long, circuitous and lonely road at the distant left, where he was guided by a few Tories, suddenly appeared at the rear of the Americans and overwhelmed them with disaster, Stirling who was fighting Grant far at the right sharing in the common misfortune. The wonderful retreat to New York

of Washington and his shattered army amidst the darkness and fog of the succeeding night, is too well known to call for details in this connection. Certain writers, without just warrant, have blamed Putnam for the defeat because he did not anticipate and prevent Clinton's movement. The most exact, thorough and impartial, and altogether the best account of the battle, is that of Mr. Henry P. Johnston, as contained in his "Campaign of 1776," published in 1878, as Vol. III of the "Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society." That careful and conscientious writer says that such an accusation against Putnam is "both unjust and unhistorical." . . . "No facts or inferences justify the charge. No one hinted it at the time; nor did Washington in the least withdraw confidence from Putnam during the remainder of the campaign." He adds that the responsibility cannot be fastened upon Putnam, who had just taken the command, "any more than upon Washington, who, when he left the Brooklyn lines on the evening of the 26th, must have known precisely what dispositions had been made for the night at the hills and passes." He then proceeds to show how the responsibility, if it falls on any one, falls on Sullivan, and on Colonel Miles and his regiment, whose duty it was to guard the left.

In occupying New York after the retreat, Washington assigned to Putnam the command of the city as far up as Fifteenth street, while Spencer and Heath were to guard the island from that point to Harlem and King's Bridge. On the 15th of September, five British frigates appeared and took position in Kip's Bay, on the east side, opening a tremendous fire upon the breast-work and lines of Colonel Douglas with his 300 Connecticut militia and his battalion of levies. The Colonel's panic-stricken forces fled in all directions, nor could the desperate and almost superhuman exertions of Washington and Putnam, who were soon on the ground, avail to stay their flight. Other New England troops quickly joined in the stampede, and from all points the Americans were soon flying in wild disorder towards Harlem Heights, except that General Putnam "was making his way towards New York when all were going from it," his object being to rescue Sullivan's Brigade and some artillery corps that were still in the city and conduct them to the place of safety. This was successfully accomplished, and Col. David Humphreys, who was the earliest biographer of Putnam and who was in the army and saw him frequently during that day, says: "Without his extraordinary exertions, the guards must have been inevitably lost and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces."

The battle of Harlem Heights took place on the next day, the fugitives having been vigorously pursued by the British. The advantage was with the Americans, and General Greene, referring to the engage-

ment, said that Putnam was "in the action and behaved nobly." In the battle of White Plains, Washington sent Putnam with a detachment to the support of McDougall, but not in season to succor him before his safe retreat. Subsequently he sent him to command 5,000 troops on the west side of the Hudson river, for the protection of Gen. Greene who was there at Fort Lee, and who it was feared might be attacked by the enemy. The speedy capture of Fort Washington on the east side by the British, was the direst calamity to the American cause in all the Revolutionary War. As the commander-in-chief led his wasted army across the Jerseys, hotly pursued by the foe, he sent Putnam forward to take command of Philadelphia which was supposed to be in danger, and construct fortifications for its defence. Colonel Humphreys, who was still with Putnam, gives a glowing account of his herculean labors and great success in this work, attended as it was with manifold obstacles and discouragements. While he was thus engaged, Washington crossed the Delaware and soon won his brilliant victories at Trenton and Princeton, which electrified the country and raised the spirits of the tired and dejected army. As the loss of Philadelphia was now no longer feared, Putnam was stationed for the winter at Princeton, whence he made various expeditions against foraging parties of the enemy, taking nearly a thousand prisoners, more than 120 baggage wagons and large quantities of provisions and other booty.

It was now of prime importance to seize and hold the Highlands on the Hudson. In May, 1777, a commission, consisting of Generals Greene, Knox, McDougall, Wayne and George Clinton, Governor of New York, were directed to proceed thither, examine the defences, see what was needed, and report accordingly. This they did, and among the various works which they recommended was an enormous boom or chain across the river at Fort Montgomery, with other obstructions at that point, to bar the ascent of the enemy's ships. Washington gave the command of the region to General Putnam, who fixed his headquarters at Peekskill, on the east side of the Hudson, and whose troops were from New York and New England. But on the 12th of June, just as he began to execute the plan of the commission, he was ordered to forward most of his men to Philadelphia which was now again threatened by General Howe. At the same time he was obliged to hold various regiments in readiness to march against Burgoyne, who was expected at any moment to come down from the north. Again and again Washington called upon him for detachments for the Delaware, directing him to reinforce himself by militia recruits from the neighborhood or from Connecticut. What with these many changes, the presence around him of watchful foes, incessant marches and countermarches, and the miserable condition of his

soldiers, so many of whom were new and raw, Putnam's situation was painfully perplexing. Some of his men deserted and others he deemed it advisable to dismiss from the service which they wished to abandon and for which they were unfit. He wrote to Washington, representing to him the danger he apprehended from his weakened condition and saying to him that he could not be held responsible for whatever serious consequences might ensue.

Sir Henry Clinton saw his opportunity. Sailing up the river from New York with three or four thousand troops, he appeared in Tarrytown Bay on the 5th of October, and after much manœuvring landed his forces at Verplanck's Point, just below Peekskill, transferred a large body of his men to the west side, and filed them off amidst a dense fog behind the high banks until they reached the rear of Forts Montgomery and Clinton, whence they stormed these strongholds which soon fell into their possession, though the commission of generals in their report had declared them to be inaccessible from that quarter, owing to the very mountainous character of the region. The river was now open to the enemy, who at once proceeded to ravage the country. Putnam, with the advice of a council of officers, removed his headquarters to Fishkill, a few miles north of Peekskill, for the safety of his little army. The immediate commander of Fort Montgomery was Governor Clinton, who, as danger was imminent, had been summoned from the legislature at Kingsbury by Putnam and was urged to bring a body of militia with him. Here, also, Putnam was subsequently blamed for the defeat, but Clinton nobly demanded that the censure should fall on himself and not on others, and a later court of inquiry decided that the disaster was due to a lack of men and not to the neglect or incompetency of those who were in command. Says Washington Irving: "The defences of the Highlands on which the security of the Hudson depended, were at this time weakly garrisoned, some of the troops having been sent off to reinforce the armies on the Delaware and in the north."

Sir Henry returned to New York and Putnam reoccupied Peekskill and the neighboring passes. The latter shortly wrote to Washington, announcing to him the sad intelligence of his wife's death, but with it, also, the glorious news of the surrender of Burgoyne. Five thousand men now came to Putnam from the northern army. Washington had previously suggested to him a descent upon New York and he now recommended it again, but afterward, hearing that Sir Henry was in New York and fearing he might join General Howe, he despatched Alexander Hamilton to Putnam at Peekskill and to General Gates at Albany, with orders to them to forward large bodies of troops to the vicinity of Philadelphia, the British being in possession of that city. Putnam de-

layed compliance with Hamilton's instructions, being perhaps too intent on the long-meditated attack upon New York. The youthful martinet, scarcely out of his teens, wrote a bitter letter to Washington in consequence and also an insolent one to the old scarred veteran himself, who very properly sent the missive he had received to the commander-in-chief, alleging that it contained "unjust and ungenerous reflections," mentioning some of the reasons for the delay, and saying, "I am conscious of having done everything in my power to succor you as soon as possible." But the order had been a peremptory one, and Washington for the first and only time in his life reprimanded his old, trusted companion-in-arms, even as he once reprimanded Hamilton himself for an act of tardiness by saying to him, "You must change your watch, or I must change my aid." Putnam was now unpopular in New York. The people of the state were strongly prejudiced against New Englanders, and the feeling had notably manifested itself at the time of the "cowardly" and "disgraceful" flight of Connecticut and Massachusetts soldiers at Kip's Bay, while it was but natural that this dislike should be warmly reciprocated. "Yorkers" and "Yankees" were epithets which were freely bandied between the two parties. Hamilton and other leading men of his state wanted their Governor to be placed in command. Many of them held Putnam responsible for all the misfortunes on the Hudson, accused him of being too lenient with the tories in the neighborhood, and were unwilling to support the cause of their country so long as he retained his position. Colonel Humphreys, whose testimony here is very significant, avers that the chief cause of the animosity in question is to be referred to Putnam's determined opposition to the dishonesty and selfish greed of influential men who were charged with the care of the sequestered property of tory families. But it seemed to Washington all-important to hold the state of New York to the support of the army and the government, and this was the only reason he presented for the change, when, some months after Hamilton's mission to Albany and Peekskill, he gave the command to General McDougall. As we shall see, Washington still regarded Putnam with unabated friendship and affection, and still honored him with high trusts.

Meanwhile, in the latter part of the year 1777, Putnam had set on foot several expeditions which were more or less successful. During the winter he was at the Highlands, whence he wrote to Washington, who was with his suffering army at Valley Forge:—"Dubois' regiment is unfit to be ordered on duty, there being not one blanket in the regiment; very few have either a shoe or a shirt, and most of them have neither stockings, breeches nor overalls." In company with Governor Clinton and others, he selected West Point as the site of the chief fortress, and

began vigorously to put the defences of the Hudson on a respectable footing. About this time he made a visit to Pomfret to attend to his private affairs. After his return and his removal from the command of the Highlands, he again went to Connecticut, in obedience to orders, to hasten on the new levies of militia from that state for the coming campaign. Subsequent to the battle of Monmouth, we find him in charge of the right wing of the army, in place of General Lee who was under arrest. In the early autumn of 1778, he was again in the neighborhood of West Point for the defence of the North river. In the winter he was posted at Danbury with three brigades, to protect the country lying along the Sound, to cover the magazines on the Connecticut river, and to reinforce the Highlands in case of need. It was while he was here, that he very successfully quelled a serious mutiny that arose among some of the troops who had endured much hardship and received no pay, and who were preparing to march in a body to Hartford and demand redress from the General Assembly at the point of the bayonet. It was in this region, also, that he posted himself with 150 men on the brow of a high, steep eminence at Greenwich, or Horse Neck, and, as General Tryon advanced towards him with ten times the force, dashed on his steed down the precipice to the amazement of his pursuers and escaped unharmed, bidding his little company to secure their own safety by retiring to a neighboring swamp which was inaccessible to cavalry. He immediately collected a party of militia, joined with them his original handful, and hung on the rear of Tryon in his retreat, taking forty or fifty of his men as prisoners. These he treated with so much kindness that Tryon, as the biographers tell us, addressed to him a handsome note in acknowledgment, accompanied with a present of a complete suit of clothes, though it does not appear that there was any attempt again to supersede the General for such manifest and highly appreciated "aid and comfort" to the enemy!

General Putnam's military career was now hastening to its close. In the spring of 1779, Sir Henry Clinton was preparing for a campaign up the North river. Late in May, Washington moved his army towards the Highlands from Middlebrook. Putnam crossed the river and joined the main body in the Clove, one of the deep defiles, where in the latter part of June he was left in immediate command, while Washington took up his headquarters at New Windsor, and then, about a month later or a few days after the brilliant capture of Stony Point by Wayne, at West Point. Putnam's post was at Buttermilk Falls, two miles below. As if it was determined by his great chief, that he should not be sacrificed to the enmity of his foes, he was here given the command of the right wing of the army, having under him troops from Pennsylvania,

Maryland and Virginia. It was from July to December, of this year, that the most important works at West Point and in its vicinity were chiefly constructed. One of his biographers says; "Experienced in this department, he took an active and efficient part in completing the fortifications which had been laid out under his own eye and the site for which had been selected through his agency. He had the honor of giving his own name to the principal fort." Sir Henry contented himself with depredations in other quarters.

While the army was in winter quarters, Putnam again visited his family in Pomfret. On returning to the camp, he was attacked with paralysis, which seriously affected the use of his limbs on one side and which obliged him to retrace his steps and pass the remainder of his days at home. He had strong hopes that he might yet be well enough to join once more his comrades and engage in active service, but this was not to be. Yet he lived for ten years more, was able to take a moderate amount of exercise in walking and riding, retained full possession of his mental faculties, was an object of great interest and veneration on the part of his neighbors and the people generally, was fond of relating stories of the wars in which he had been engaged to groups of young and old who were wont to gather around him, and was quick and eager to learn all he could about the campaigns in which he could not now participate and the affairs of the country he could no longer serve. When in 1783 the Treaty of Peace had been concluded between England and America and the cause he loved had gloriously triumphed, he sent his congratulations to Washington, from whom he received in reply a beautiful and touching letter, full of grateful recollections and of the old undying friendship.

"In 1786," says the letter of Hon. Samuel Putnam from which we have already twice quoted, "he rode on horseback from Brooklyn to Danvers and paid his last visit to his friends there. On his way home, he stopped at Cambridge at the college, where the governor of the college paid him much attention. It was in my junior year; he came into my room. His speech was much affected by palsy."

In the month of May, 1790, he was violently attacked with an inflammatory disease, which from the first he was satisfied would prove mortal. It was of short duration, continuing but a few days. On the 29th he passed to his rest, "calm, resigned, and full of cheerful hope." And the narrator adds: "The grenadiers of the 11th Regiment, the Independent Corps of Artillerists and the militia companies in the neighborhood, assembled each at their appointed rendezvous early on the morning of June 1st, and having repaired to the late dwelling house of the deceased, a suitable escort was formed, attended by a procession of

Masonic brethren present and a large concourse of respectable citizens, which moved to the Congregational meeting-house in Brooklyn; and, after divine service performed by the Rev. Dr. Whitney, all that was earthly of a patriot and hero was laid in the silent tomb, under the discharge of volleys from the infantry, and minute guns from the artillery." Mr. Whitney's funeral sermon, afterward published, dwelt touchingly upon the exalted virtues and merit of his departed parishioner whom he had known intimately for many years, rendering the highest testimony to his character as a Christian man, as an ardent lover and noble defender of his country, and as a most faithful, excellent and beloved citizen, husband, father and friend. In due time a monument was erected over his grave, bearing an epitaph which was written by the celebrated Rev. Timothy Dwight, D.D., President of Yale College, who also knew him well, and whose marble inscription states that "he dared to lead where any dared to follow," that his "generosity was singular and his honesty was proverbial," and that "he raised himself to universal esteem, and offices of eminent distinction, by personal worth and a useful life."

In 1818, long years after the old warrior had sunk to his rest and a grateful country had recorded his name high on the roll of her noblest defenders, the malignant feeling which has been adverted to on a previous page and which had all the while lain smothered and rankling in the breasts of a few surviving officers of the Revolution, at length found vent in a published "Account of the Battle of Bunker Hill," by General Henry Dearborn. It denied to Putnam, not only the command, but also any active participation in that engagement; represented him as cowardly, unfaithful, and base in his conduct on the occasion; and otherwise sought to blacken his memory. The public was stung to indignation and rage. The press denounced the calumny and its author. Notable men came forward to voice the righteous anger of the people, and confute the statements and allegations of the accuser. Col. Daniel Putnam, the able and highly esteemed son of the departed veteran, whom we have seen with his father at the plow in Pomfret, on the arrival of the news from Lexington, April 20, 1775, wrote and published an eloquent and triumphant answer, of which, with another letter from the same source, John Adams said; "Neither myself nor my family have been able to read either with dry eyes;" they "would do honor to the pen of Pliny." Other distinguished sons of Connecticut, like Thomas Grosvenor and John Trumbull, confirmed the manly and telling reply with their weighty words. Hon. John Lowell, of Boston, gave to the press a series of trenchant articles in which he exposed the envious and vindictive spirit of the attack and effectually riddled the attempted falsification of history. Daniel Webster appeared on the scene and in his

own masterful way vindicated the character of the slandered dead. Col. Samuel Swett issued his fresh and full account of the battle already mentioned, in which he set forth, in detail, the patriotic and heroic part which Putnam had taken in it, as the chief of the contending provincial forces. Aged soldiers, who were perhaps supposed to have also passed away, but who were still lingerers on the stage in many a section of New England, rose on every side as from their graves, to testify anew their love and loyalty to their lamented leader, and to stamp as false his traducer's charges and declarations. And the state of Massachusetts had not long to wait for an opportunity to set its formal and final seal to the just and general verdict.

Yet Dearborn was not alone in his bitterness at what he repeatedly and ruefully refers to as the "extraordinary popularity," the "universal popularity," or the "ephemeral and unaccountable popularity" of Putnam; nor was he alone responsible for the groundless and wicked aspersions which he made. The substance of these first appeared, as early as the year 1810, in a sketch of General Stark, published in a New Hampshire paper which was not less hostile to Putnam than it was favorable to the "hero of Bennington," the editor's personal friend. Stark, who was an able officer and a very brave man in battle, was the reputed author or source of the accusations. He was a person of strong passions and prejudices, was sensitive to slights and had on several occasions during his military career thrown up his command when he had thought that his own claims to preferment had been overlooked, or when others had been promoted and he had not. He was one of those who had been made unhappy by Putnam's high honors and great popularity; and the annoyance was not a little intensified by the circumstance that he had been worsted in a court trial, at which a case of Putnam's interference with certain irregularities among the New Hampshire troops was brought forward for examination and decision. The enmity seems never to have died out. It was shared not only by Dearborn, who was a captain in Stark's regiment at Bunker Hill, but also by Major Caleb Stark, the colonel's or general's son. One of these, at least, was at length busy in seeking supports for their strange story of the battle and in privately disseminating it abroad as he found opportunity. During the year following the great event, Stark, the father, appears to have given his version of it to the infamous General James Wilkinson. When, in 1815, the latter was preparing for publication what McMaster, in his new *History of the people of the United States*, justly describes as his "three ponderous volumes of memoirs, as false as any yet written by man,"—he wrote to Major Stark for fuller information about the occurrences of June 17, 1775, asking him for aid in procuring subscriptions for his work,

and informing him of his desire or purpose to correct certain prevalent misconceptions concerning matters of Revolutionary history! He had already heard from Dearborn.

The bait took. The major was pleased, sent him some things that he wanted, referred him to *Dearborn* for *more*, and wished him abundant success in his literary enterprise. And then it was, that Wilkinson embraced in his "false" and "ponderous" volumes an account of the battle as written by himself, and as based upon the testimony of this little coterie of Putnam's enemies. It is with reference to these memoirs, published in 1816, that Richard Frothingham himself says, in his *Siege of Boston*; "This work contains the earliest reflections on General Putnam's conduct on this occasion, either printed or in manuscript, that I have met." The historian had not seen the New Hampshire paper of 1810. Its detraction had died an early death. Wilkinson's renewal of it, six years later, also produced no particular effect on the public mind. It was left to Dearborn to stir it into life again, and it was only when one who had creditably filled so many prominent positions as he had held, dragged it forth once more, two years later yet, for wider notice, charged with a still more venomous spirit, that it received any general attention, or that it was deemed worth the while to brand it as it deserved. And now it remains to be added, that it is just these perversions and falsifications of the truth, which were prompted by such unworthy motives and had such ignoble beginnings, and which were then brought forward in their more amplified and offensive form forty-three years after the battle of Bunker Hill and more than a quarter of a century after General Putnam and the vast majority of his contemporaries had passed from earth, but *only a few months after the death of Colonel Humphreys*, his old personal friend, his intimate companion in war, and up to the time of this juncture his sole biographer—a circumstance, of which Mr. Webster makes mention—that, in lack of better material, were seized upon by partisans of Prescott as props for their new theory of his supreme command on the ever memorable day. Whoever will read attentively what these friends and eulogists of the Pepperell soldier have written about the battle cannot fail to see what eager and extensive use they have made of the discredited testimony, and with what painstaking and disingenuous skill they have woven it into their narratives for the end in view. Certain Stark men, of New Hampshire, in their antipathy to Putnam, feel that they can safely enough extol Prescott, his supposititious rival, while yet they labor to lift to proud preëminence their own hero and essay to remove the one fatal obstacle by alleging that the army in the field, as a whole, was without an actual and responsible head. The Prescott men regard the latter contention with compla-

gency, so long as their own favorite is exalted, and common cause is made against Putnam. Whatever jealousy exists between the two parties is held in abeyance, as both alike are made to realize that there is another commander whose claims are paramount to those of either Stark or Prescott, and whom it is for the interest of both parties to disparage, to ignore and to get rid of. Hence their constant and studied endeavor, while they may not still venture the more brutal defamations that were found to be so unprofitable in earlier years of the century, to minimize as much as possible Putnam's best action or service; to magnify and give credence to idle things that have been said to his prejudice; to conceal or weaken the force of the evidence that goes to establish his supremacy; and, as in some recent instances, to leave him out of sight altogether, not even his name being mentioned, as if he had no part or lot in the matter. And this is the way that some men write history. A late cycloramic representation of the battle, following such authorities, made Prescott and the redoubt at the extreme right of the lines the only real object of attention or interest, had nothing to show of the tremendous conflict at the rail-fence, and Dearborn-like placed Putnam far in the safe background, quietly sitting on his horse, and apparently engaged in conversation with a bystander and unconcerned about what was going on in full view before him.

But General Putnam, however he has himself been maligned or wronged, never by word or act betrayed any such feeling of jealousy, hatred, or revenge towards others. He was swift and severe to upbraid and chastise those who were cravens or skulkers in the hour of imminent peril. But the records furnish no proof that he ever regarded with even the slightest envy or rancor any of his comrades. He never sought to undermine the good reputation or the fair fame of those who deserved well of their country. He was not troubled at their popularity or promotions, and as little did he seek by unworthy means or with a selfish spirit his own advantage or distinction. The honors and the praise that came to him were the free, unbought and spontaneous gifts of the state, the government and the people, whom he so gallantly served, and to whom he so gladly devoted the strength of his earlier and later years. He was as kind as he was generous, and he was as brave as he was magnanimous. Foremost in the strife, he was also last at the post of danger when others fled the scene. He knew how to spare a fallen foe, and he knew as well how to be loyal and true to his friends. He wore no masks, but was frank, open and honest, and as transparent as the day. His was no dark, sinister, tricky or deceitful nature; and President Dwight most truthfully said of him;—"His word was regarded as an ample security for anything for which it was pledged, and his uprightness commanded absolute confidence."

He was not without his faults, defects, or mistakes. Neither were any of his contemporaries, however great or good. If, like others, he was bluff and unlettered, it may be remembered that he had but few early school or social advantages, and that very much of his maturer life was spent on the frontiers or in the camp. If his words lacked polish or refinement, they were, at least, clear and vigorous and to the point.¹

If he was not one of the great commanders or strategists, yet was he a bold and fiery leader and inspirer of men, whose rare natural genius and aptitudes for military service were everywhere recognized and always called into requisition, and whose more daring, and dashing kind of warfare was often quite as necessary and useful as the faculty which he may not have so fully possessed for arranging complicated plans and combining numerous forces for a more extensive scene of operations. Washington said of him, that he was "a most valuable man and a fine executive officer," and it has been seen how frequently and how continuously he assigned to him the most important trusts he had at his disposal, until the growing infirmities of age unfitted him for the burden. Against all attempts of smaller men, who did not know him, or have not learned who or what he was, to write him down by belittling his capacity or his patriotism, we place that simple and sufficing testimony of one who knew him long and well, who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," and whose judgment may perhaps be not unreasonably preferred to that of the critics and censors of a later time.

Like so many of the military officers of his day, Putnam, it is said, often indulged in profane language. If he did, he had the manliness and grace openly to confess and renounce his sin and express his sorrow for it, thereby giving to all who villify, as well as all who blaspheme, a good example which they may well follow. Whatever forbidden word he may have made use of under the sway of vehement passion, and amidst the heat and stress of battle, few men were at heart more reverent of God and sacred things than was he.

A distinguished grandson of the General, Judge Judah Dana, who was formerly United States Senator from Maine, wrote the following description of the subject of our sketch :

¹ We copy, by way of illustration, the characteristic letter which General Putnam wrote to Sir Henry Clinton in reply to an insolent and threatening message sent him by that British commander under a flag of truce, demanding the release and return of a tory spy who had been caught in the American camp. It runs as follows :

"HEADQUARTERS, 7 AUGUST, 1777.

"Sir: Edmund Palmer, an officer in the Enemy's service, was taken as a spy, lurking within our lines. He has been tried as a spy, condemned as a spy, and shall be executed as a spy, and the flag is ordered to depart immediately.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM.

P. S.—He has been accordingly hanged."

“In his person, for height about the middle size, very erect, thick-set, muscular and firm in every part. His countenance was open, strong, and animated; the features of his face large, well proportioned to each other and to his whole frame; his teeth fair and sound till death. His organs and senses were all exactly fitted for a warrior; he heard quickly, saw to an immense distance, and though he sometimes stammered in conversation, his voice was remarkably heavy, strong and commanding. Though facetious and dispassionate in private, when animated in the heat of battle his countenance was fierce and terrible, and his voice like thunder. His whole manner was admirably adapted to inspire his soldiers with courage and confidence, and his enemies with terror. The faculties of his mind were not inferior to those of his body; his penetration was acute; decision rapid, yet remarkably correct; and the more desperate the situation, the more collected and undaunted. With the courage of a lion, he had a heart that melted at the sight of distress; he could never witness suffering in any human being without becoming a sufferer himself. Martial music roused him to the highest pitch, while solemn sacred music sent him into tears. In his disposition he was open and generous almost to a fault, and in his social relations he was never excelled.”

Of the many other just and eloquent tributes which eminent Americans have paid to General Putnam's memory, the following from Washington Irving may fitly conclude our story :

“A yeoman warrior, fresh from the plough, in the garb of rural labor; a patriot brave and generous, but rough and ready, who thought not of himself in time of danger, but was ready to serve in any way, and to sacrifice official rank and self-glorification to the good of the cause. He was eminently a soldier for the occasion. His name has long been a favorite one with young and old, one of the talismanic names of the Revolution, the very mention of which is like the sound of a trumpet. Such names are the precious jewels of our history, to be garnered up among the treasures of the nation, and kept immaculate from the tarnishing breath of the cynic and the doubter.”

APPENDIX.

GENERAL PUTNAM AND HIS TROOPS ON PROSPECT HILL.

The following is taken from the *Salem Register*, of August 14, 1875. (See in connection, page 17 of the sketch. Also Am. Archives, 4th series, vol. II, p. 1687.)

"Major-General Putnam, one hundred years ago on the 21st of July, had all the Continental troops under his command assembled on Prospect Hill, near Cambridge, Mass., and had the declaration by the Continental Congress, setting forth the causes and necessity of taking up arms, read to them, and the Connecticut flag unfurled. The *Salem Gazette* reprinted quite recently, from its old files, this account of the affair :

'Last Tuesday morning, according to orders issued the day before by Major-Gen. Putnam, all the Continental troops under his immediate command assembled on Prospect Hill, when the Declaration of the Continental Congress was read, after which an animated and pathetic address to the army was made by the Rev. Mr. Leonard. Chaplain to General Putnam's regiment, and succeeded by a pertinent prayer ; when General Putnam gave the signal, and the whole army shouted their loud Amen by three cheers ; immediately upon which a cannon was fired from the fort, and the standard lately sent to General Putnam was exhibited flourishing in the air, bearing on one side this motto, "An Appeal to Heaven;" and on the other side, "Qui Transtulit Sustinet." The whole was conducted with the utmost decency, good order and regularity, and to the universal acceptance of all present, and the Philistines on Bunker Hill heard the shout of the Israelites, and being very fearful, paraded themselves in battle array.'

Says Samuel Adams Drake, in his *Old Landmarks of Middlesex*: "On New Year's Day, 1776, the Union Flag, bearing thirteen stripes, was hoisted at Prospect Hill, and saluted with thirteen guns. This was the birthday of the new Continental Army of undying fame. Now, for the first time, the thirteen united Colonies had a common flag."

BATTERY ON WINTER HILL.

In connection with the footnote statement, on page 106, that, after the Battle of Bunker Hill, General Stark and his brave New Hampshire men retired to Winter Hill, the following wall inscription at the recently erected battery on the latter summit, now within the limits of Somerville, may appropriately be copied here.

"THIS BATTERY

was erected by the City in 1885 and is within the lines of the

FRENCH REDOUBT

which was thrown up by the American troops under General Israel Putnam, immediately after the Battle of Bunker Hill, and later became a part of the besieging lines of Boston in 1775-6.

The guns were donated by Congress, and were in service during the civil war.

Erected, 1890,"

DATES OF GEN. ISRAEL PUTNAM'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

In many of the biographical accounts of General Putnam, a strange error as to the dates of his death and burial has been perpetuated for three quarters of a century. The first sketch of the life of the old hero, written by his friend and comrade, Col.

David Humphreys, and published in 1788, made no mention of his demise, for the very good reason that he was still living at that time and still survived until 1790. A new edition of the biography was published in 1818, with an Appendix containing a somewhat extended account of the battle of Bunker Hill by Col. Samuel Swett. But immediately appended to the earlier part of the contents of the book were a few pages, narrating the circumstances of the veteran's final departure and of his funeral obsequies, and giving also the address which was delivered at his grave by Dr. Albigeance Waldo and a full copy of the epitaph which had been written by President Dwight and inscribed on his tomb. It is evident that the account of the death and burial, as thus published in 1818, was not written by Colonel Humphreys, as he himself died early in that year, and as he was too familiar with the whole story of his old commander to make the mistakes which seem to have had here their origin. Who it was that blundered, we do not know. He records that the General was taken violently ill on the 17th of May, 1790, died on the 19th, and was buried on the 21st. Both of the last dates are wrong, however it may be with regard to the first. The copied epitaph also incorrectly gives the day of his death, as the 19th, and this error, thus made and repeated in the volume referred to, has crept thence into nearly if not quite all the fuller biographical accounts and also into many of the briefer sketches, which have since appeared.

It would seem that the hand that copied the monument inscription must have made the original mistake, writing the 19th for the 29th, as the marble slab says the latter, not the former. Whoever concluded Col. Humphrey's narrative may have followed the copyist in the epitaph as taken for his pages. Subsequent writers would find it much more convenient to turn for facts to the well known and extensively circulated book than to repair to the cemetery record, or even to consult the small pamphlet which contains the funeral discourse by Rev. Mr. Whitney, and which had been printed, doubtless in a limited edition, twenty-eight years before Humphrey and Swett appeared together, for Whitney as well as Dwight is correct in regard to this particular date. But once the erroneous date of the 19th having been accepted, the day of the funeral, as being the 21st, may have been purely a conjecture.

The Danvers Historical Society, in its commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the death of General Putnam, followed the biographers and other authorities, no one at the time, among all those who participated in the occasion, or knew about it, calling the day of observance in question. Shortly afterward the president of the society received a letter from Rev. Judah Dana of Rutland, Vt., a great grandson of the hero, saying that the 29th, and not the 19th, was the real anniversary; as evidenced by his copy of Mr. Whitney's now very rare pamphlet—a treasure which a little later he donated to that institution. A subsequent photogravure impression of the marble slab, as contained in the published proceedings at the dedication of the recently erected equestrian statue of General Putnam at Brooklyn, Conn., confirmed the statement. It could hardly be that Whitney and Dwight both were at fault. Yet to settle the question for my own mind, I have examined the files of old papers for the year 1790, in the New England Historical Genealogical Society collections, and have there found in the *Independence Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, of June 10, 1790, the following account, which, taken in connection with the two authorities just mentioned, sufficiently shows that the great majority of later writers have copied one from another without applying to the true and original sources of information. In quoting, for my own sketch of Putnam, a passage relating to the death and funeral from the unknown hand that finished Humphrey's story, I have simply changed the dates, in conformity to this early record, which may be of interest to those who have read the foregoing pages.

"MAJOR-GENERAL PUTNAM.

"Brooklyn, Conn., June 3, 1790. Saturday last died here, after a short illness, in the 73d year of his age, that celebrated hero, patriot, and philanthropist, ISRAEL PUTNAM,

Esq., Major-General in the late Continental army. He enjoyed his reason to the last moments of his life, and with remarkable cheerfulness and solid satisfaction, left this for the everlasting rewards of a *better* and more *glorious country*, and on Tuesday his funeral was attended by the largest and most respectable collection of the inhabitants ever known here on a like occasion.

“After a well adapted sermon was delivered by the Rev. *Josiah Whitney*, the procession moved to the burying ground, in the following order :

COMPANY OF GRENADIERS,
MILITIA OF THE TOWN, WITH REVERSED ARMS,
MUSIC,
COMPANY OF ARTILLERY,
FREE MASONS IN THE BADGES OF THEIR ORDER,
BEARERS { THE CORPSE } BEARERS,
MOURNERS,
THE CLERGY,
THE CHURCH OF BROOKLYN,
MILITARY OFFICERS,
INHABITANTS.

“When the procession had arrived at the burying ground, the troops opening to the right and left, the Masons passed on to the grave—and after performing their accustomed ancient ceremonies, and pronouncing a short eulogium on the character of the deceased, the Grenadiers advanced, and fired three platoons, which was succeeded by a discharge from the artillery. The whole was concluded with that order and decorum, which the love and respect of the inhabitants inspired.”

Dr. Albigece Waldo's eulogium, above referred to, was published in the *Independent Chronicle* of June 24, 1790, two weeks later, and was taken from Thomas' *Massachusetts Spy*.

Consulting an old almanac, for the year 1790, I find that “June 3,” the date of the communication to the *Chronicle*, was Thursday. “Saturday last”, the day of departure, must therefore have been May 29th, and accordingly “Tuesday,” the day of the funeral, must have been June 1st, as stated in my sketch.

A. P. P.

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